

Greg Abbott

Gregory Wayne Abbott (born November 13, 1957) is an American attorney serving as the 48th and current governor of Texas since 2015. A member of the Republican Party, he previously served as the 50th Attorney General of Texas from 2002 to 2015. He is the third governor of any U.S. state to permanently use a wheelchair.^{[2][3]} He is also the first disabled governor in Texas history.^[4]

Abbott was the second Republican to serve as Attorney General of Texas since Reconstruction. Prior to assuming the office of attorney general, he was a justice of the Texas Supreme Court, a position to which he was initially appointed in 1995 by then-Governor George W. Bush. He successfully advocated for the right of the state of Texas to display the Ten Commandments in front of the Texas State Capitol in Austin, in a 2005 United States Supreme Court case known as *Van Orden v. Perry*.

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Greg Abbott



48th Governor of Texas

Incumbent

Assumed office

January 20, 2015

Lieutenant [Dan Patrick](#)

Preceded by [Rick Perry](#)

Chair of the Republican Governors Association

Incumbent

Assumed office

November 21, 2019

Preceded by [Pete Ricketts](#)

50th Attorney General of Texas

In office

December 2, 2002 – January 5, 2015

Governor [Rick Perry](#)

Preceded by [John Cornyn](#)

Succeeded by [Ken Paxton](#)

Associate Justice of the Texas Supreme Court

In office

January 2, 1996 – June 6, 2001^[1]

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Preceded by	<div>Jack Hightower</div>
Succeeded by	<div>Xavier Rodriguez</div>
Personal details	
Born	<div>Gregory Wayne Abbott</div> <div>November 13, 1957</div> <div> Wichita Falls, Texas, U.S.</div>
Political party	<div>Republican</div>
Spouse(s)	<div>Cecilia Phalen ^(m.) 1981)</div>
Children	<div>1</div>
Residence	<div>Governor's Mansion</div>
Education	<div>University of Texas at Austin (BBA)</div> <div>Vanderbilt University (JD)</div>
Signature	<div></div>
Website	<div>Government website (http://gov.texas.gov)</div>

Early life, education and early law career

Abbott was born on November 13, 1957, in Wichita Falls, Texas, of English descent. His mother, Doris Lechristia Jacks Abbott, was a homemaker and his father, Calvin Rodger Abbott, was a stockbroker and insurance agent.^{[5][6]} When he was six years old, they moved to Longview; the family lived in the East Texas city for six years.^[5]

At the beginning of junior high school, Abbott's family moved to Duncanville. In his sophomore year in high school, his father died of a heart attack; his mother went to work in a real estate office.^[5] He graduated from Duncanville High School.^[7] He was on the track team in high school and asserts that he won every meet he entered his senior year.^[8] He was in the National Honor Society and was voted "Most Likely to Succeed."^[8]

In 1981, he earned a Bachelor of Business Administration in finance from the University of Texas at Austin, where he was a member of the Delta Tau Delta fraternity and the Young Republicans Club. He met his wife, Cecilia Phelan, while attending UT Austin.^[5] In 1984, he earned his Juris Doctor degree from the Vanderbilt University Law School in Nashville, Tennessee.^[5]

On July 14, 1984, at age 26, Abbott was paralyzed below the waist when an oak tree fell on him while he was jogging following a storm.^{[9][10]} He had two steel rods implanted in his spine, underwent extensive rehabilitation at TIRR Memorial Hermann in Houston and has used a wheelchair ever since.^{[11][12]} He sued the homeowner and a tree service company, resulting in an insurance settlement that provides him with lump sum payments every three years until 2022 along with monthly payments for life; both are adjusted "to keep up with the rising cost of living".^[13] As of August 2013, the monthly payment amount was US\$14,000.^[13] Prior to becoming governor, Abbott subsequently backed legislation in Texas that limits "punitive damages stemming from noneconomic losses" and "noneconomic damages in medical malpractice cases", at \$750,000 and \$250,000, respectively.^[14] While the settlement in Abbott's case was a "nonmedical liability lawsuit", which remains uncapped, Abbott has faced criticism for "tilt[ing] the judicial scales toward civil defendants."^[14]

Abbott went into private practice, working for Butler and Binion, LLP between 1984 and 1992.^[9]

Judicial career

Abbott's judicial career began in Houston, where he served as a state trial judge in the 129th District Court for three years.^[9] Then-Governor George W. Bush appointed Abbott to the Texas Supreme Court; he was then twice elected to the state's highest civil court — in 1996 (two-year term) and in 1998 (six-year term). In 1996, Abbott had no Democratic opponent but was challenged by Libertarian John B. Hawley of Dallas. Abbott defeated Hawley by a margin of 84% to 16%.^[15] In 1998, Abbott defeated Democrat David Van Os by 60% to 40%.^[16]

In 2001, after resigning from the Supreme Court, Abbott went back to private practice and worked for Bracewell & Giuliani LLC.^[17] He was also an adjunct professor at University of Texas School of Law.^[18]

Attorney General of Texas

2002 election

Abbott resigned from the Texas Supreme Court in 2001 to seek the position of Lieutenant Governor of Texas.^[5] His campaign for Lieutenant Governor had been running for several months when the previous attorney general, John Cornyn, vacated the post to run for the U.S. Senate.^[5] He then switched his campaign to the open attorney general's position in 2002. Abbott defeated the Democratic nominee, former Austin mayor and current state senator Kirk Watson, 57% to 41%.^[19] Abbott was sworn in on December 2, 2002, following fellow Republican Cornyn's election to the Senate.

Tenure

Abbott expanded the attorney general's office's law enforcement division from about thirty people to more than one hundred.^[5] He also created a new division called the Fugitive Unit to track down convicted sex offenders in violation of their paroles or probations.^[5]

In 2003, Abbott supported the Texas Legislature's move to cap non-economic damages for medical malpractice cases at \$250,000, with no built-in increases for rising cost of living.^[20] The statute allows nuances for higher awards in cases of wrongful death or when more than one health care institution is involved.^[20]

Abbott has spoken out against concerns such as voter fraud, infringement on the right to bear arms, and President Barack Obama's health care reform. When asked what his job entails, Abbott says: "I go into the office in the morning, I sue Barack Obama, and then I go home."^[21] Abbott has filed suit against various U.S. agencies, including the Environmental Protection Agency, the Department of Health and Human Services (including challenges to Obamacare), and the Department of Education, among many others.^[5]



Greg Abbott talks about the Harriet Miers nomination with President George W. Bush and former Texas Supreme Court Justices in 2005. From left: Eugene Cook, Raul Gonzalez, Abbott, John Hill, James Baker, Bush, and Craig Enoch



Abbott and John Cornyn highlight Crime Stoppers Month in San Antonio, 2008

Abbott filed thirty one lawsuits against the Obama administration.^[22] According to *The Wall Street Journal*, from Abbott's tenure as Attorney General through his first term as Governor, Texas sued the Obama administration at least forty-four times, more than any other state over the same period; court challenges included carbon-emission standards, health-care reform, transgender rights, and others.^[23] *The Dallas Morning News* compared Abbott to Scott Pruitt, noting that both Attorneys General had repeatedly sued the federal government over its environmental regulations.^[24] The *Houston Chronicle* noted that Abbott "led the charge against Obama-era climate regulations."^[25]

Abbott has said that the state must not release Tier II Chemical Inventory Reports for security reasons, but that Texans "can ask every facility whether they have chemicals or not."^[26] Koch Industries has denied that their contributions to Abbott's campaign had anything to do with his ruling against releasing the safety information.^[27]

In March 2014, Abbott filed a motion to intervene with three separate Federal Court suits against Baylor Scott & White Medical Center - Plano, in which patients alleged that the hospital allowed Christopher Duntsch to perform neurosurgery despite knowing that he was a dangerous physician.^[28] Abbott cited the Texas Legislature's cap on malpractice cases, along with the statute's removal of the term "gross negligence" from the definition of legal malice, as reasons for defending Baylor.^[29]

Lawsuit against Sony BMG

On November 21, 2005, Abbott sued Sony BMG.^{[30][31]} Texas was the first state in the nation to bring legal action against Sony BMG for illegal spyware.^{[30][31]} The suit is also the first filed under the state's spyware law of 2005.^{[30][31]} It alleges the company surreptitiously installed the spyware on millions of compact music discs (CDs) that consumers inserted into their computers when they played the CDs, which can compromise the systems.^{[31][32]} On December 21, 2005, Abbott added new allegations to his lawsuit against Sony-BMG. Abbott says the MediaMax copy protection technology violates the state's spyware and deceptive trade practices laws.^{[30][33]} He says Sony-BMG offered consumers a licensing agreement when they bought CDs and played them on their computers.^{[30][33]} However, Abbott alleges in the lawsuit that even if consumers reject that agreement, spyware is secretly installed on their computers, posing security risks for music buyers.^{[30][33]} Abbott said, "We keep discovering additional methods Sony used to deceive Texas consumers who thought they were simply buying music," and "[T]housands of Texans are now potential victims of this deceptive game Sony played with consumers for its own purposes."^{[30][33]} In addition to violations of the Consumer Protection Against Computer Spyware Act of 2005, which allows for civil penalties of \$100,000 for each violation of the law, the alleged violations added in the updated lawsuit, on December 21, 2005, carry maximum penalties of \$20,000 per violation.^{[33][34]}

Separation of Church and state

On March 2, 2005, Abbott appeared before the United States Supreme Court in Washington, D.C., where he defended a Ten Commandments monument on grounds of the Texas State Capitol. Thousands of similar monuments were donated to cities and towns across the nation by the Fraternal Order of Eagles, who were inspired by the Cecil B. DeMille film *The Ten Commandments* (1956) in following years.^[35] In his deposition, Abbott said that "The Ten Commandments are a historically recognized system of law."^[36] The Supreme Court held in a 5–4 decision that the Texas display did not violate the First Amendment's Establishment Clause and was constitutional.^[37]

After Abbott's oral arguments in *Van Orden v. Perry*, Justice John Paul Stevens commented upon Abbott's performance while in a wheelchair, "I want to thank you [...] for demonstrating that it's not necessary to stand at the lectern in order to do a fine job."^[8]

Gun policies

In January 2013, following the approval by New York governor Andrew Cuomo of the further strengthening of the state's gun laws, Abbott advertised on news sites to internet users with Albany, N.Y. and Manhattan ZIP codes suggesting gun owners should migrate to Texas. His political campaign provided the funding. The two messages read: "Is Gov. Cuomo looking to take your guns?" while the other said: "Wanted: Law abiding New York gun owners looking for lower taxes and greater opportunity."^[38] The adverts linked to a letter on Facebook in which Abbott stated such a move would enable citizens "to keep more of what you earn and use some of that extra money to buy more ammo."^[38]

In February 2014, Abbott argued against a lawsuit brought by the National Rifle Association to allow more people access to concealed carry of firearms, as Abbott felt this would disrupt public safety.^[39]

Support for ban on sex toys

As Attorney General, Abbott (unsuccessfully) defended Texas' ban on sex toys.^[40] He said Texas had a legitimate interest in "discouraging prurient interests in autonomous sex and the pursuit of sexual gratification unrelated to procreation."^[40]

Opposition to same-sex marriage

As Attorney General, Abbott fought to prevent courts from legalizing same-sex marriage.^[41] In 2014, he argued in court that Texas should be allowed to prohibit same-sex marriage because LGBT individuals purportedly cannot procreate. He said that as "same-sex relationships do not naturally produce children, recognizing same-sex marriage does not further these goals to the same extent that recognizing opposite-sex marriage does."^[40] He also argued that gay individuals can marry individuals of the opposite sex, thus there is no discrimination against LGBT individuals.^[40] He suggested that same-sex marriage was a slippery slope where "any conduct that has been traditionally prohibited can become a constitutional right simply by redefining it at a higher level of abstraction."^[40]

2006 election

In the November 7, 2006, general election, Abbott was challenged by civil rights attorney David Van Os, who had been his Democratic opponent in the 1998 election for state Supreme Court. He won re-election to a second term by a margin of 60% to 37%.^[42]

2010 election

Abbott ran for a third term in 2010. He defeated the Democratic attorney Barbara Ann Radnofsky of Houston and the Libertarian Jon Roland once again. Radnofsky was also the unsuccessful Democratic candidate opposing U. S. senator Kay Bailey Hutchison in the 2006 general election. Abbott defeated Radnofsky by a margin of 64% to 34%.^[43] He was the longest-serving Texas attorney general in Texas history.^[44]

In July 2013, the *Houston Chronicle* alleged improper ties and oversight between many of Abbott's largest donors and the Cancer Prevention and Research Institute of Texas, of which he was a director.^[45]

Governor of Texas

2014 election

On July 8, 2013, Governor Rick Perry announced that he would not seek a fourth full term.^[46]

On July 14, 2013, speaking near the Alamo on the 29th anniversary of the accident that left him a paraplegic, Abbott formally announced his intention to run for Governor of Texas in the 2014 Texas gubernatorial election.^[47] In the first six months of 2011, he raised more funds for his campaign than any other Texas politician, reaching \$1.6 million. The next highest fundraiser among state officeholders was Texas comptroller Susan Combs with \$611,700.^[48]

In February 2014, while speaking on the dangers of corruption in law enforcement, Abbott compared the South Texas area to a Third World country^[49] that "erodes the social fabric of our communities and destroys Texans' trust and confidence in government."^[50] Abbott further said that he does not consider corruption "limited to one region of Texas [...] My plan is to add more resources to eliminate corruption so people can have confidence in their government."^[50]

Abbott criticized Ted Nugent's "subhuman mongrel" comment directed at President Barack Obama by saying "This is not the kind of language I would use or endorse in any way. It's time to move beyond this, and I will continue to focus on the issues that matter to Texans."^[51]

Abbott won the Republican primary on March 4, 2014, with 1,219,903, or 91.5% of the ballots cast. The remaining approximately 103,000 votes were divided among three minor candidates. He faced state senator Wendy Davis of Fort Worth, who polled 432,065 votes (79.1%) in her Democratic primary contest against a lone opponent.^[52]

Abbott promised to "tie outcomes to funding" for pre-K programs if elected governor,^[53] but he said he would not require government standardized testing for 4-year olds, as Davis has accused him of advancing.^[54] When defending his education plan, Abbott cited Charles Murray: "Family background has the most decisive effect on student achievement, contributing to a large performance gap between children from economically disadvantaged families and those from middle class homes."^[55] A spokesman for Abbott's campaign pointed out that the biggest difference in spending is that Davis has proposed universal pre-K education while Abbott wants to limit state funding to only programs that meet certain standards.^[55] Davis' plan could reach 750 million in costs and Abbott has said that Davis' plan is a "budget buster" whereas Abbott's education plan would cost no more than 118 million.^[55] Overall, Abbott said the reforms that he envisioned would "level the playing field for all students [and] target schools which don't have access to the best resources." He has called for increased accessibility to technology in the classroom and mathematics instruction for kindergarten pupils.^[50]



Abbott speaking at FreePac in Phoenix, 2012

Abbott received 1.4 million in campaign contributions from recipients of the Texas Enterprise Fund, some of whose members submitted the proper paperwork for grants.^[56] Elliot Nagin of the Union of Concerned Scientists observed that Abbott was the recipient of large support from the fossil fuels industries, such as NuStar Energy, Koch Industries, Valero Energy, ExxonMobil, Chevron, and ConocoPhillips.^[57] Abbott received the endorsement of the *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*,^[58] *Dallas Morning News*,^[59] the *Lubbock Avalanche-Journal*^[60] and the *Tyler Morning Telegraph*.^[61] Abbott, and his lieutenant governor running mate, Dan Patrick, gained an endorsement from the National Rifle Association and received their 'A' rating.^[62]

Abbott defeated Davis by about 19 percentage points in the November general election.^{[63][64][65][66]}

2018 election

In January 2017, Abbott was reportedly raising funds for a 2018 re-election bid as governor; as of December 2016, he had \$34.4 million on hand for his campaign, of which he raised \$9 million during the second half of 2016.^{[67][68]} Lieutenant Governor Dan Patrick had been mentioned as a potential challenger for governor but confirmed he would run for a second term as lieutenant governor.^[68] During the weekend of January 21, 2017, Abbott stated he was intending on running for re-election.^[69] He confirmed this on March 28, 2017.^[70]

Abbott formally announced his re-election campaign on July 14, 2017.^[71] He chose the Amtrak depot at historic Sunset Station in San Antonio for his formal announcement of candidacy: "I've proven that I'm willing to take on the liberals, I'm willing to take on Washington, D.C., and I'm counting on you to have my back." Several protesters were led out of the hall before Abbott began speaking.^[72] The formal announcement came four days before the beginning of a special legislative session that could split the Republican Party into factions favoring Abbott and Lieutenant Governor Patrick, on one hand, and House speaker Joe Straus, a Moderate Republican who opposes much of the Abbott-Patrick social conservative agenda.

In the November 6 general election, Abbott defeated Democratic nominee Lupe Valdez with about 56% of the vote.^{[73][74][75][76]} Abbott received 42% of the Hispanic vote and 16% of African Americans.^[77]

Tenure

Abbott was sworn in as the governor of Texas on January 20, 2015.^{[78][79]}

Abbott declared February 2, 2015, as "Chris Kyle Day" in honor of the deceased United States Navy SEAL who was the most lethal sniper in U.S. military history (portrayed in the film *American Sniper*).^{[80][81][82]} This came exactly two years after Kyle was shot and killed.^[80] Abbott held his first meeting as governor with a foreign prime minister when he met with the Irish Taoiseach Enda Kenny on March 15, 2015, to discuss trade and economic relations.^[83]

During the 2015 legislative session, initiated by officials at the Texas Health and Human Services Commission, the Texas Legislature placed a rider in the Texas budget to cut \$150 million from its budget by ending payments and coverage for various developmental



Abbott speaking at the 2016 World Travel and Tourism Council conference

therapies for children on Medicaid. A lawsuit has been filed against the state on behalf of affected families and therapy providers, claiming it can cause irreparable damage to the affected children's development.^[84] The litigation obtained a temporary injunction order on September 25, 2015, barring THSC from implementing therapy rate cuts.^[85]

The Trump Administration appointed several former appointees of Abbott to federal court positions, something some media outlets attributed to Abbott's influence on the administration.^[86]

His 2016 book, *Broken But Unbowed* is a reflection on his personal story and views on politics.^[87]

In October 2016, explosive packages were mailed to Abbott, President Obama, and the Commissioner of the Social Security Administration. The governor's package did not explode when he opened it because "he did not open [the package] as intended".^[88]

On June 6, 2017, Abbott called for a special legislative session in order to pass several legislative priorities for Abbott,^{[89][90]} something supported by Lieutenant Governor Dan Patrick.^[91] Abbott vetoed 50 bills in the regular 2017 session, the most vetoed in a session since 2007.^{[92][93]}

Abortion

In late November 2016, the State of Texas, at Abbott's request, approved new rules that require facilities that perform abortions either to bury or cremate the aborted, rather than dispose of the remains in a sanitary landfill.^{[94][95]} The rules were intended to go into effect on December 19,^[94] but on December 15 a federal judge blocked the rules from going into effect for at least one month after the Center for Reproductive Rights and other advocacy groups filed a lawsuit.^[96] On January 27, 2017, a federal judge ruled against the law, but the State of Texas vowed to appeal the ruling.^[97]

On June 6, 2017, Abbott signed a bill into law banning dismemberment and partial-birth abortions and requiring either the cremation or burial of the aborted.^{[98][99][100]} The law was also blocked by a federal judge; the state said it would appeal.^{[101][102]}

Convention of States proposal

On January 8, 2016, Abbott called for a national constitutional convention to address what he sees as abuses by justices of the United States Supreme Court in "abandoning the Constitution."^[103] Abbott proposed passing nine new amendments to the Constitution, intended to limit the power of the federal government and expand states' rights.^[104] Speaking to the Texas Public Policy Foundation, Abbott said, "We the people have to take the lead to restore the rule of law in the United States."^[105]

In 2016, Abbott spoke to the Texas Public Policy Foundation, calling for a Convention of States to amend the U.S. Constitution. In his speech, he released a plan that includes nine proposed amendments to "unravel the federal government's decades-long power grab "to impose fiscal restraints on the federal government and limit the federal government's power and jurisdiction."^[106] Abbott elaborated on his proposal in a public seminar at the Hoover Institute on May 17, 2016.^[107]



Governor Abbott with President Donald Trump during Hurricane Harvey emergency

Gun laws and related comments

On June 13, 2015, Abbott signed the campus carry (SB 11) and the open carry (HB 910) bills into law.^[108] The campus carry law came into effect on August 1, 2015 and allows the licensed carrying of a concealed handgun on public college campuses, with private colleges being able to opt out.^{[108][109]} The open carry bill went into effect on January 1, 2016 and allows the licensed carrying of handguns openly in public areas and in private businesses that do not display a 30.07 sign. The 30.07 sign (referring to state penal code 30.07) states that a handgun may not be carried openly even by a licensed gun carrier. To do so openly is considered trespassing.^{[108][109][110]} Texas is the 45th state to have open carry.^[111]

On May 26, 2017, Abbott signed a bill into law lowering handgun carry license fees.^[112]

Following the Sutherland Springs church shooting on November 5, 2017, during an interview with Fox News, Abbott urged historical reflection and the consideration that evil had been present in earlier "horrific events" during the Nazi era, the Middle Ages and biblical times.^[113] Southwest Regional Director of the Anti-Defamation League (ADL), Dayan Gross, said Abbott's comparison of the mass shooting "to the victims of the Holocaust" were both "deeply offensive" and "insensitive".^{[114][115]}

After the Santa Fe High School shooting on May 18, 2018, Abbott said that he would consult across Texas in an attempt to prevent gun violence in schools^[116] and a series of round-table discussions followed at the state capitol.^[117] In a speech to a NRA convention in Dallas almost two weeks later, Abbott said: "The problem is not guns, it's hearts without God".^[118] In June 2019, he signed a bill allowing for more armed teachers with school districts being unrestricted as to the number they allow.^[119] The creation of "threat assessment teams", passed into law by the bill, are intended to identify potentially violent students.^[120] Although the state legislature passed measures for students services to deal with related mental health issues, so called red flag laws were defeated. "Right now it's not necessary in the state of Texas", Abbott said.^[119]

In comments to CNN after the 2019 El Paso shooting on August 3, 2019, Abbott said the state authorities would "prosecute it as capital murder" and "also as a hate crime".

Jade Helm 15

Abbott on April 28, 2015, asked the State Guard to monitor the training exercise Jade Helm 15 amid Internet-fueled suspicions that the war simulation was really a hostile military takeover.^{[121][122][123][124]} In 2018 former director of the CIA and NSA Michael Hayden said that the conspiracy theory had been propagated by Russian intelligence organizations and that Gov. Abbott's response convinced them of the power such a misinformation campaign could have in the United States.^[125]

Religion

On June 11, 2015, Abbott signed the "Pastor Protection Act," which allows pastors to refuse to marry couples if they feel doing so violates their beliefs.^[126]

On May 21, 2017, Abbott signed Senate Bill 24 into law, preventing state or local governments from subpoenaing pastors' sermons.^{[127][128]} This bill was inspired by an anti-discrimination ordinance in Houston, where hundreds of sermons from five pastors were subpoenaed.^[127]

On June 15, 2017, Abbott signed House Bill 3859 which allows faith-based groups working with the Texas child welfare system to deny services "under circumstances that conflict with the provider's sincerely held religious beliefs." Democrats and civil rights advocates said the adoption bill could allow such groups to discriminate against those who practice a different religion or who are lesbian, gay, bisexual, or transgender, and LGBT rights groups said they would challenge the bill in court.^{[129][130]} In response, California added Texas to a list of states to which it banned official government travel.^[131]

Immigration

In November 2015, Abbott announced that Texas would refuse Syrian refugees following the Paris terrorist attack that occurred earlier that month. In December 2015, Abbott ordered the Texas Health and Human Services Commission to file a lawsuit against the federal government and the International Rescue Committee to block refugee settlement, but the lawsuit was struck down by a federal district court.^[132]

On February 1, 2017, Abbott blocked funding to Travis County, Texas, due to its recently implemented sanctuary city policy.^{[133][134]} On May 7, 2017, Abbott signed Texas Senate Bill 4 into law, targeting sanctuary cities by charging county or city officials who refuse to work with federal officials and by allowing police officers to check the immigration status of those they detain if they choose.^{[135][136]}

In January 2020, Abbott made Texas the first state to decline refugee resettlement under a new rule implemented by the Trump administration.^[137] The move was condemned in a joint statement by all 16 Catholic bishops of Texas.^[138]



Abbott speaks at the Texas gubernatorial debate at the LBJ Presidential Library in 2018

Environmental issues

Abbott believes that Earth's climate is changing, but he thinks that further study is necessary to determine human role in such changes.^{[139][140]}

In early 2014, Abbott participated in strategy sessions held at the headquarters of the United States Chamber of Commerce in Washington, D.C., devising a legal strategy for dismantling climate change regulations.^[141]

In 2016, Abbott supported the appointment of Scott Pruitt to head the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), noting "He and I teamed up on many lawsuits against the EPA."^[142]

Voter purge

Abbott was implicated in the purging of nearly 100,000 registered voters from voter rolls. The voters were purged under allegations that they were not American citizens, however the Texas secretary of state later publicly stated that tens of thousands of legitimate voters had been wrongly removed. Abbott claimed that he played no role in the voter purge, but emails released in June 2019 showed that Abbott pressed officials at the Department of Public Safety about the purge before it was implemented.^[143]

LGBT rights

Abbott condemned the Supreme Court ruling which found prohibitions on same-sex marriage to be unconstitutional.^[144] He said, "the Supreme Court has abandoned its role as an impartial judicial arbiter."^[144] Shortly thereafter, Abbott filed a lawsuit to stop same-sex spouses of city employees from being covered by benefit policies.^[145]

In a letter dated May 27, 2017, the CEOs of 14 large technology companies, including Facebook, Apple, Microsoft, and Amazon, urged Abbott not to pass discriminatory legislation.^[146] At issue was the so-called "bathroom bill," which would require transgender people to use the bathroom of the sex listed on their birth certificates, not the one of their choice. The bill was revived by Abbott and supported by Republican lieutenant governor Dan Patrick.^[147] In March 2018, Byron Cook, the chairman of the House State Affairs committee who blocked the bill, claimed that Abbott privately opposed the bill.^[148] The bill was never signed; Abbott later stated that "it's not on my agenda," in a debate with Lupe Valdez, the Democratic candidate for governor in 2018.^[149]

In 2017, Abbott signed legislation to allow taxpayer-funded adoption agencies to refuse same-sex families from adopting children.^[150]

Homelessness

In June 2019, the city of Austin introduced an ordinance that repealed a 25-year-old ban on homeless people camping, lying, or sleeping in public.^[151] Abbott, a vocal critic of the ordinance, came under fire after sharing multiple Twitter posts about various incidents allegedly instigated by homeless people, including a car accident, that were later proven false.^[152] In early October 2019, Abbott sent a widely publicized letter to Austin Mayor Steve Adler criticizing the camping ban repeal and threatened to deploy state resources to combat homelessness.^[152]

In November 2019, Abbott directed the State of Texas to open a temporary homeless encampment on a former vehicle storage yard owned by the Texas Department of Transportation, which was informally dubbed "Abbottville" by camp residents.^[153]

Other

In 2017, Abbott signed a bill into law enacting a statewide ban on texting while driving.^[154]

COVID-19 pandemic

During the COVID-19 pandemic, Abbott implemented a stay-at-home order from April 2 to May 1, 2020.^{[155][156]} This was one of the shortest stay-at-home orders implemented by any governor.^[156] Since the reopening, coronavirus surged across Texas, leading Abbott to pause the gradual re-opening.^[156] On 24 June 2020, Texas broke its record in terms of number of new coronavirus cases in a day.^[156] Critics described Abbott's pause as a half-measure, arguing that he should reverse the re-opening in full to stave off the spread of the virus.^[156]

According to the *New York Times*, Abbott's response to the coronavirus pandemic has been contradictory, as he has said that Texans should stay at home while also saying that Texas is open for business.^[156] He also said that Texans should wear face masks, but refused to issue a statewide

mandate.^[156] Abbott's response to the coronavirus pandemic has received bipartisan criticism.^[156] In July 2020, Abbott directed counties with more than 20 coronavirus cases to wear masks in public places; he had previously prohibited local governments from implementing required face masks.^[157]

Electoral history

On November 4, 2014, Abbott defeated Wendy Davis by 21 points. According to exit polls he received 44 percent of the Hispanic vote and 50 percent of Hispanic men, a majority (54 percent) of women voters, and 62 percent of the votes of married women (75% of women in Texas are married).^{[158][159][160]}

A week after his election, Abbott announced that Carlos Cascos, of Brownsville, the county judge since 2007 of Cameron County in far South Texas, would become the secretary of state of Texas.

Personal life

Abbott, a Roman Catholic, is married to Mexican-American Cecilia Phalen Abbott, the granddaughter of Mexican immigrants.^{[164][165][166]} His election as governor of Texas makes her the first Latina to be the first lady of Texas since Texas joined the union.^{[165][167]} They have one adopted daughter, Audrey.^{[17][164][165]} They were married in San Antonio in 1981.^[5] Cecilia is a former school teacher and principal.^[9] He is the third elected governor of a U.S. state to use a wheelchair after Franklin D. Roosevelt of New York (1929–1932) and George Wallace of Alabama (1963–1967, 1971–1979; 1983–1987).^{[2][3]}

Abbott knows some Spanish but is not fluent. He was learning the language as of 2013.^{[168][169]}

Abbott suffered second- and third-degree burns on his legs after coming in contact with scalding water while on vacation in Wyoming in July 2016, which caused him to miss the 2016 Republican National Convention.^{[170][171]}



Greg Abbott (far right) and Cecilia Abbott (far left) with President Donald Trump and First Lady Melania Trump

See also

- COVID-19 pandemic in Texas

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External links

- Governor Greg Abbott Official state website (<http://gov.texas.gov/>)
- Official website (<http://www.gregabbott.com/>)
- Greg Abbott (https://curlie.org/Regional/North_America/United_States/Texas/Society_and_Culture/Politics/Candidates_and_Campaigns/Governor/Greg_Abbott) at Curlie
- Appearances (<https://www.c-span.org/person/?gregabbott>) on C-SPAN

Legal offices		
Preceded by <u>Jack Hightower</u>	<u>Associate Justice of the Texas Supreme Court</u> 1995–2001	Succeeded by <u>Xavier Rodriguez</u>
Preceded by <u>John Cornyn</u>	<u>Attorney General of Texas</u> 2002–2015	Succeeded by <u>Ken Paxton</u>
Party political offices		
Preceded by <u>Rick Perry</u>	<u>Republican nominee for Governor of Texas</u> 2014, 2018	Most recent
Preceded by <u>Pete Ricketts</u>	<u>Chair of the Republican Governors Association</u> 2019–present	Incumbent
Political offices		
Preceded by <u>Rick Perry</u>	<u>Governor of Texas</u> 2015–present	Incumbent
Order of precedence		
Preceded by <u>Mike Pence</u> <i>as <u>Vice President</u></i>	<u>Order of Precedence of the United States</u> Within Texas	Succeeded by <u>Mayor of city in which event is held</u>
		Succeeded by <u>Otherwise Nancy Pelosi</u> <i>as <u>Speaker of the U.S. House of Representatives</u></i>
Preceded by <u>Ron DeSantis</u> <i>as <u>Governor of Florida</u></i>	<u>Order of Precedence of the United States</u> Outside Texas	Succeeded by <u>Kim Reynolds</u> <i>as <u>Governor of Iowa</u></i>

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